Summary

Draft EIS
SR 28 (Sunset Highway)
Eastside Corridor Project

Summary

Determining the Purpose and Need for the Project

The SR 28 Eastside Corridor Project responds to long-standing traffic problems in the Sunset Highway corridor between the Odabashian Bridge and Downtown East Wenatchee. Since the 1970s, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) along with Douglas County and the City of East Wenatchee has recognized the need to make improvements in this corridor.

Congestion, safety, access, and mobility are all identified as problems and will continue to get worse as the area grows and develops. As one example, school buses must stop traffic in both directions on this busy two-lane highway and pick up children without the benefit of sidewalks or shoulders. Not only has WSDOT identified this highway as a "high accident corridor," but also the state legislature has designated it as a Transportation Facility of Statewide Significance. Regional and local transportation plans support the need for improvements and numerous public meetings have produced direct testimony on citizens' concerns.

Between 2005 and 2025, the population in the Greater East Wenatchee Area is expected to grow from 24,000 to over 40,000. The improvements to Sunset Highway are not only designed to correct existing problems, but to serve this planned growth. Almost 90 percent of the traffic on Sunset Highway is local. One of the major challenges is meeting the needs of the local citizens while also serving as a major corridor for the transport of freight and commodities.

How the Environmental Review Process Works

WSDOT has responded to this need by proposing improvements to the Sunset Highway corridor. Through an extensive alternative evaluation process over the course of three years involving citizens, local governments, affected stakeholders, and various permitting agencies, WSDOT has identified five alternatives that meet the purpose and need for the project.

These five alternatives are compared to the No Build Alternative in this Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) as part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is the lead agency and together with WSDOT will ultimately select an alternative to construct. As required by NEPA, FHWA solicits comment and input from the public and other governmental agencies on the environmental impacts of the alternatives. These comments are considered by FHWA and WSDOT as part of their decision-making process.

The publication of the DEIS initiates the formal public comment period. During this period, WSDOT will hold a public hearing (please see the Cover Sheet of the DEIS for the time and place) and will conduct targeted community outreach to solicit comments from all members of the public including minority, low income, and elderly members on the alternatives and their environmental impacts. WSDOT and FHWA will evaluate the comments and prepare responses for publication in the Final Environmental Impact

Statement (FEIS). The FEIS will identify the preferred alternative. FHWA will make a decision that will be documented in the Record of Decision.

Selecting Alternatives

WSDOT began the evaluation of alternatives for consideration in the DEIS by considering 34 alternatives. These were ultimately reduced down to four alternatives through a comprehensive screening process that looked at whether the alternative solved the problem, improved safety, was constructible, would receive permits, and minimized displacements. Another criteria was added towards the end of the screening process that examined whether the alternative maintained the functionality and life span of the facility. Under this criteria, one of the four alternatives was modified to prepare an option that managed access more efficiently.

The five alternatives are briefly described below and illustrated in the following figures.

Alternative 1: This alternative consists of a one-way couplet (a pair of one-way streets) utilizing Sunset Highway and NW Cascade Avenue between SR 2-97 and 9th Street NE (Figure S-1).

Alternative 2: This alternative would widen NW Cascade to three lanes with a center turn lane and connect it to Sunset Highway at its southern end. Sunset Highway would be widened to five lanes with a center turn lane (Figure S-2).

Alternative 3A: This alternative would construct an extension of Eastmont Avenue from the intersection of SR 2-97 and Sunset Highway to Badger Mountain Road. Sunset Highway would be widened to five lanes with a center turn lane (Figure S-3).

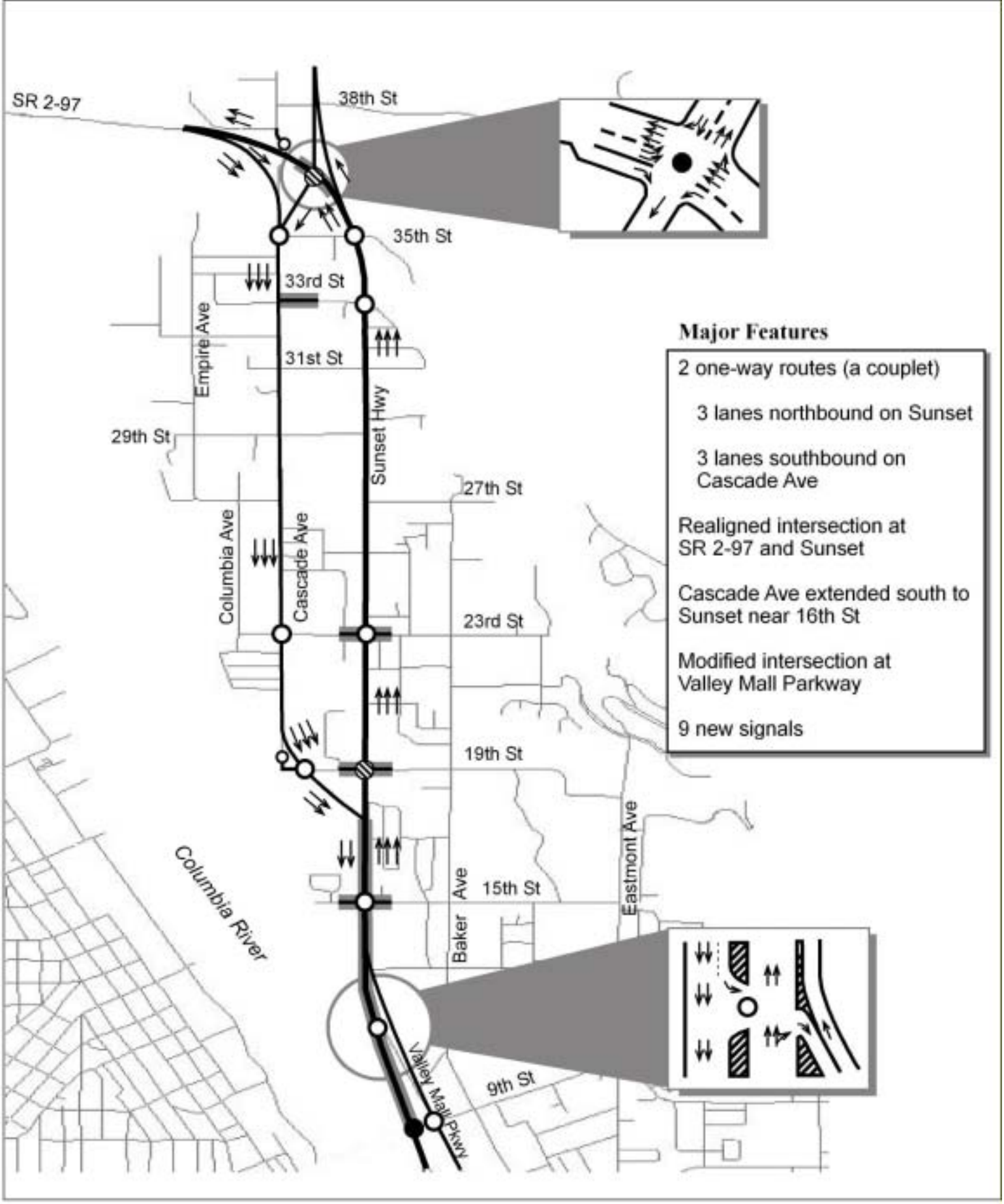
Alternative 3B: This alternative is the same as 3A but instead of center turn lane on Sunset Highway, a median would be constructed and U-turn intersections provided (Figure S-4).

Alternative 4: This alternative would construct a new alignment approximately 300 feet from the Columbia River from SR 2-97 to 13th Street NE (Figure S-5).

Each of these alternatives was evaluated in the DEIS and compared to the impacts that are expected to occur under the No Build Alternative. The No Build Alternative consists of planned and funded improvements that would be made to Sunset Highway and existing roads in the area between now and 2006. While there are identified projects beyond 2006, funding for them is not yet available.

Selecting the Preliminary Preferred Alternative

WSDOT and FHWA have tentatively selected Alternative 3B as the Preliminary Preferred Alternative for the DEIS. They made this selection after reviewing the various discipline reports and determining that Alternative 3B was the most effective at balancing functional efficiency with environmental, social, and economic effects. The selection is preliminary and subject to revision.

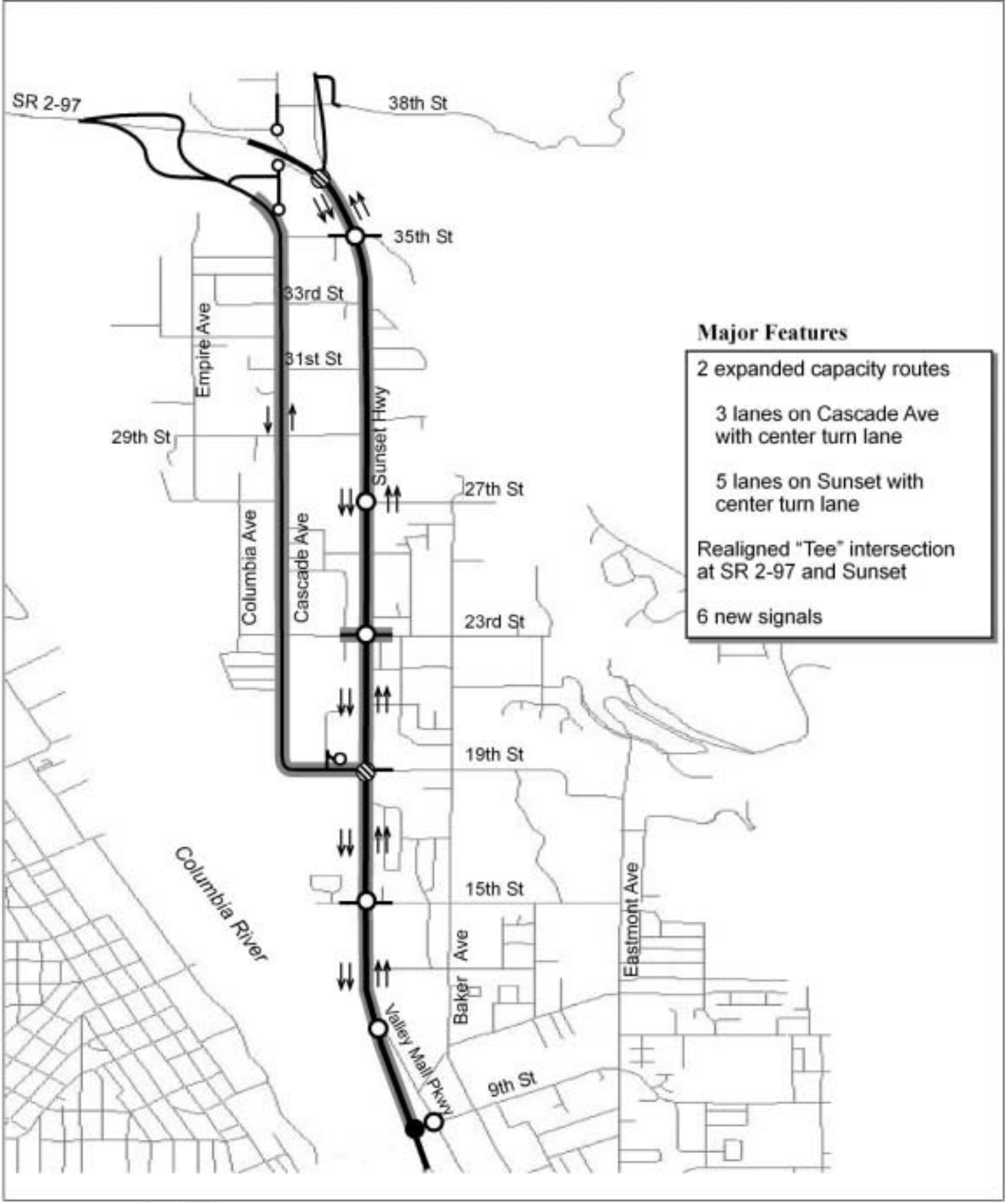


Legend

- 1 Lane Each Way
- Left Turn Pocket or 2-Way Left Turn Lane
- Through Lanes and Direction, if >1
- Cul-de-sac Road
- Existing Signal
- Revised Signal
- New Signal

NOT TO SCALE

Figure S-1
Alternative 1 Configuration



Legend

- 1 Lane Each Way
- Left Turn Pocket or 2-Way Left Turn Lane
- Through Lanes and Direction, if >1
- Cul-de-sac Road
- Existing Signal
- Revised Signal
- New Signal

NOT TO SCALE

Figure S-2
Alternative 2 Configuration

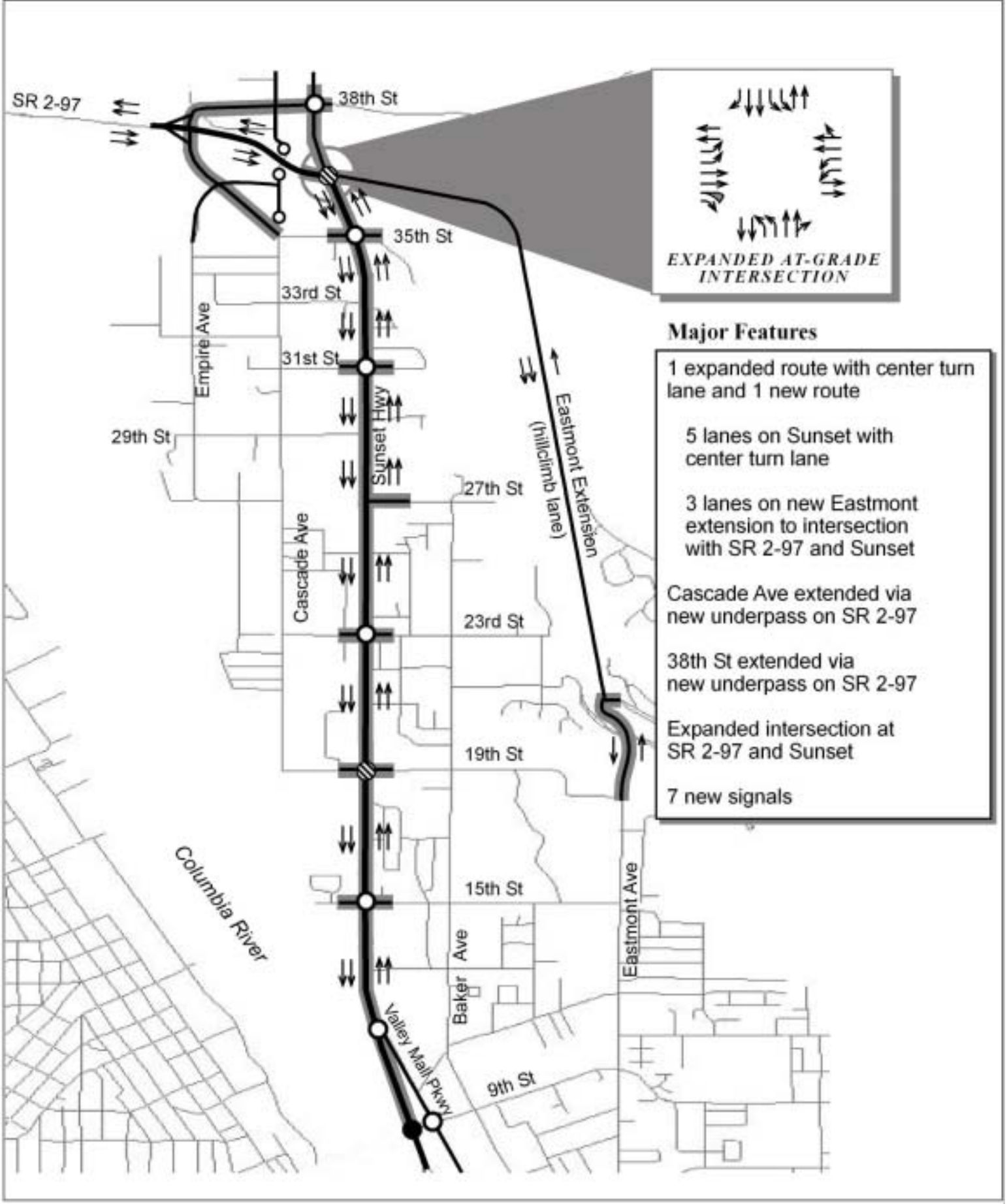
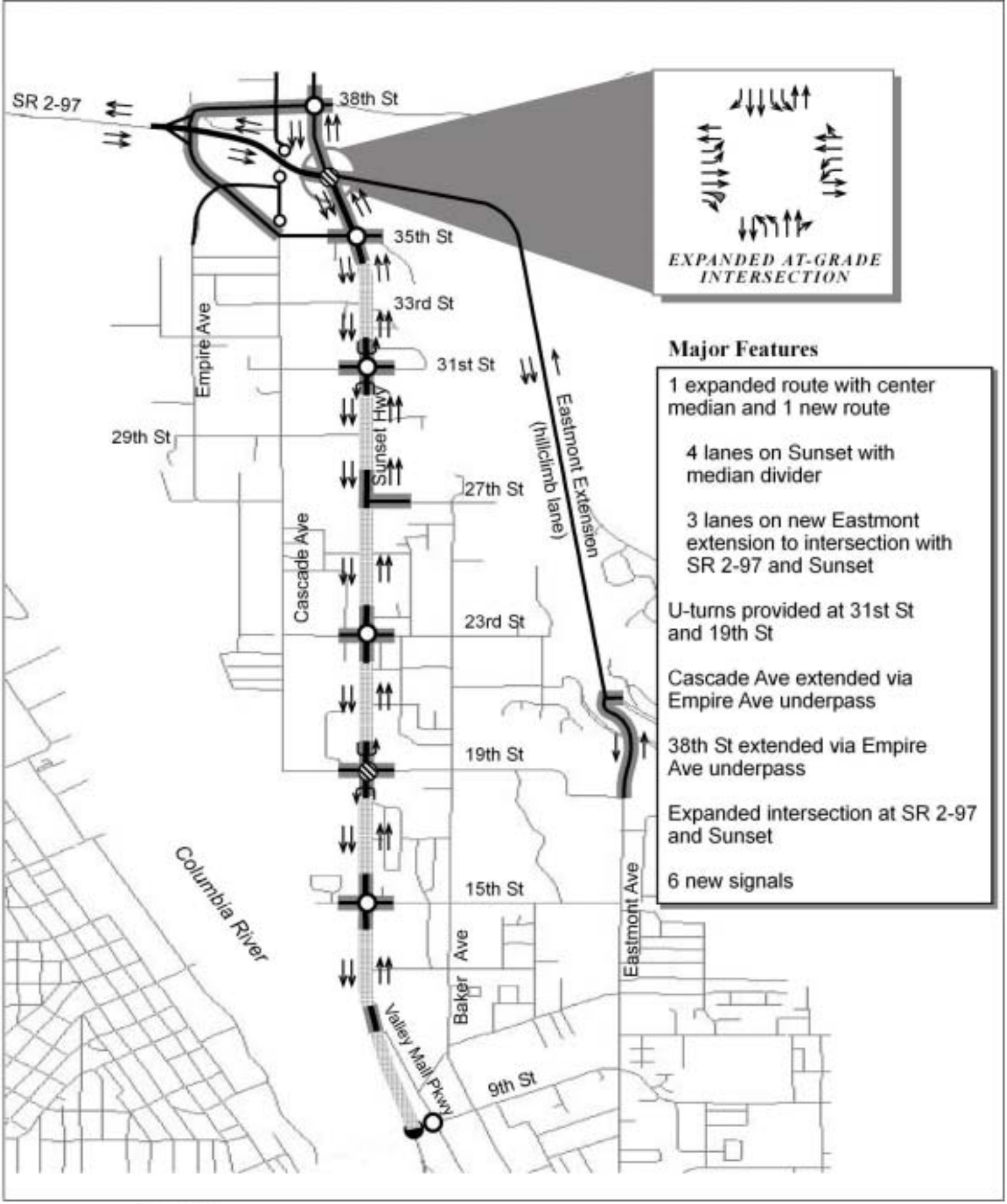


Figure S-3
Alternative 3A Configuration



Legend

- 1 Lane Each Way
- Left Turn Pocket or 2-Way Left Turn Lane
- Through Lanes and Direction, if >1
- Cul-de-sac Road
- Raised Median No Left Turns
- Existing Signal
- Revised Signal
- New Signal

NOT TO SCALE

Figure S-4
Alternative 3B Configuration

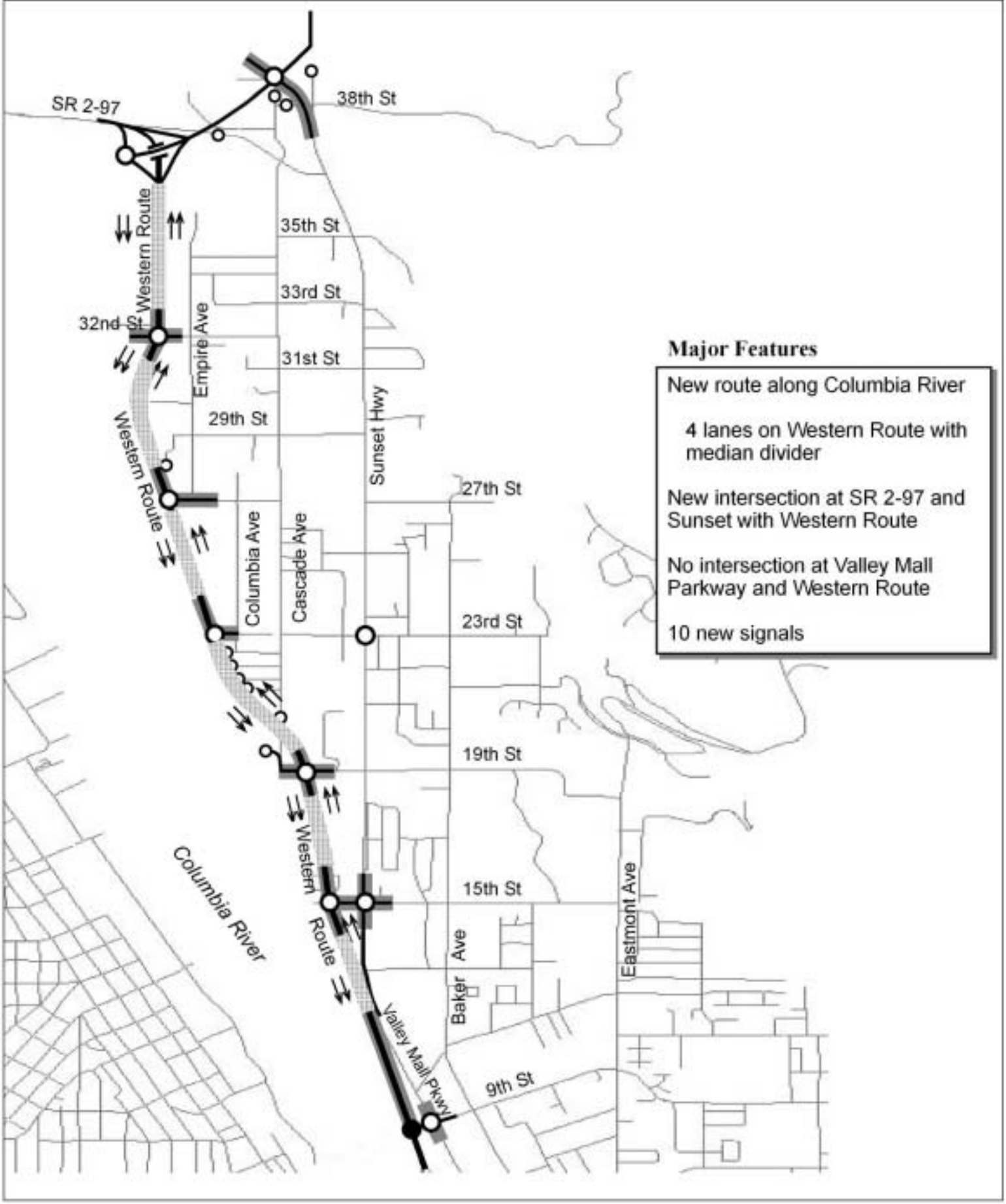


Figure S-5
Alternative 4 Configuration

The final evaluation and selection of a preferred alternative will be based on comments and information received as part of the public review process of the DEIS and other pertinent information that may become available.

Evaluating the Environmental Impacts

The DEIS evaluates each of the Build Alternatives and the No Build Alternative against nineteen areas of the environment including natural and built elements. Direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts are identified for construction and operation of the alternatives. Mitigation measures are recommended to reduce the identified impacts.

Of the nineteen environmental areas, the following have beneficial or minor impacts after mitigation measures are taken into account:

- Air quality – all of the alternatives will meet air quality standards.
- Soils and geology – erosion control best management practices will be required for all construction.
- Water resources – flooding will be reduced and the Columbia River and local streams will be protected through the use of best management practices.
- Biological resources – minor loss of habitat will occur for some alternatives, some endangered or threatened species may be indirectly impacted through disturbance.
- Visual quality and aesthetics – minor changes in views along all alternatives, existing landscapes will have minor impacts.
- Hazardous materials – known sources are identified and mitigation measures required.
- Noise – general increase in noise will occur under all alternatives including the No Build due to increased traffic, noise walls are not recommended.
- Land use – all alternatives are consistent with land use plans.
- Recreation – during construction minor indirect impacts (mainly noise and dust) to recreation facilities including the Apple Capital Loop Trail. Relocation of one trail parking area under one alternative.
- Farmland – conversion of minor acreage of farmland occur under all alternatives in areas already identified as future residential and commercial development.
- Environmental justice – no disproportionately high and adverse impacts to minority or low-income populations.
- Public services – improved services under most alternatives due to improved traffic conditions.
- Utilities – all utilities will be relocated as necessary and no breaks in service are expected.
- Energy – there are adequate energy supplies in the area for construction and operation of all alternatives.

The remaining areas of the environment may sustain more substantial impacts.

Transportation

All of the Build Alternatives satisfy the purpose and need for the project. Each would improve safety, congestion, and mobility. Each would meet Level of Service standards. What separates the alternatives is their area-wide effectiveness. Tables S-1 and S-2 summarize each alternative with respect to this measure.

Table S-1.
Measures of Traffic Effectiveness, by Alternative[1]

Measure of Effectiveness	2025 No Build Alternative	2025 Alternative 1	2025 Alternative 2	2025 Alternative 3A	2025 Alternative 3B	2025 Alternative 4
Average Speed in the Sunset Highway Corridor (mph)	15.1	33.7	25.7	30.6	32.4	33.8
Average Speed on East-West Streets (mph)	11.7	19	17.8	18.7	20.1	18.7
Delay in Eastside Study Area (hours)	813	247	311	239	198	202
Unprotected Left Turns and Through Movements (no.)	531	164	356	326	0	266
East-West Access to Eastmont Avenue (volume)	1374	1335	1351	570	509	1275
Average Travel Time Across Columbia River (min.)	17.3	15.3	15.8	15.8	14.7	15.2
Delay in Region Outside the Sunset Highway Corridor (hours)	6392	6297	6396	6314	6390	6357

Source: traffic forecasting model

[1] The measures of effectiveness are recorded in miles per hour (average speed), hours (total delay experienced by drivers), volume (vehicles per hour during peak periods), minutes (travel time), and numbers of turning vehicles.

Table S-2.
Rank Ordered Measures of Traffic Effectiveness, by Alternative

Measure of Effectiveness	2025 No Build Alternative	2025 Alternative 1	2025 Alternative 2	2025 Alternative 3A	2025 Alternative 3B	2025 Alternative 4
Average Speed in the Sunset Highway Corridor (mph)	6	1	5	3	3	1
Average Speed on East-West Streets (mph)	6	2	2	2	1	2
Delay in Eastside Study Area (hours)	6	3	5	3	1	1
Unprotected Left Turns and Through Movements (no.)	6	2	4	4	1	3
East-West Access to Eastmont Avenue (volume)	3	3	3	1	1	3
Average Travel Time Across Columbia River (min.)	6	1	4	4	1	1
Delay in Region Outside the Sunset Highway Corridor (hours)	4	1	4	1	4	3
Unweighted Sum of Rank Scores	37	13	27	18	12	14
Overall Rank Order, Unweighted	6	2	5	4	1	3

1 = best, 6 = worst. Closely ranked alternatives receive same score

The tables show that Alternative 3B ranks highest in area-wide effectiveness. But the scores are quite close between 3B, 1, and 4. The measures are unweighted and different perspectives among the various stakeholders might argue that some measures should be ranked higher.

Historic Resources

Historic resources are those that are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Homes, buildings, or structures that are over 50 years in age are evaluated for eligibility. Because the area contains a number of older homes, each of the alternatives adversely impacts some historic properties. For example, all of the alternatives impact the eligible irrigation canal built in 1908. Table S-3 below illustrates the differences between the alternatives in impacts to historic resources.

Table S-3.
Comparison of Effects on Eligible NRHP Properties

ALTERNATIVE	EFFECT		
	Potentially Affected Properties[1]	Indirect Non-adverse Effect	Direct Adverse Effects Requiring Removal
No Build	0	0	0
Stormwater Facilities	5	0	0
Alternative 1	12	7	3
Alternative 2	12	4	6
Alternatives 3A & 3B	9	4	5
Alternative 4	8	1	7

[1] The total number of NRHP eligible properties within the area of potential effect for that alternative.

Alternative 1 affects the fewest historic buildings in part because it has the smallest footprint. Alternative 2 has the largest footprint and likewise affects more sites. Alternative 4 is a new alignment through several older neighborhoods and affects seven historic sites. Alternatives 3A and 3B only involve Sunset Highway and relatively few newer homes along the Eastmont Extension.

Cultural Resources

All of the alternatives potentially impact cultural resources because the Study Area was actively used by Native Tribes for the past 10,000 years or more. Because of the high probability of discovering cultural artifacts and resources, the project will be subject to strict measures governing construction. In general, these will begin with avoidance and transition to recovery where avoidance is not possible.

Economic/Relocations

The economic impacts include both beneficial and negative impacts. The beneficial impacts include the boost to the local economy from the construction of any alternative. Table S-4 below shows the estimated project costs of each alternative.

Table S-4.
Summary of Estimated Project Costs for Build Alternatives

Alternative	Estimated Construction Contract	Estimated Construction w/ ROW	Total Estimated Design to Operation
No Build	N/A	N/A	$ 3,019,397
Alternative 1	$ 57,909,498	$ 119,820,778	$ 138,106,532
Alternative 2	$ 57,048,430	$ 120,119,070	$ 139,743,917
Alternatives 3A and 3B	$ 72,890,998	$ 129,588,478	$ 151,614,837
Alternative 4	$ 64,967,007	$ 104,740,362	$ 121,401,793

Source: *Resource Dimensions estimates*
NOTE: Estimates are based on preliminary design information and may be revised in the final design and construction phase of the project. Totals reflect all associated costs (design, construction, consulting, and operation) estimated for the first 10-year project cycle. Guidelines provided by WSDOT, 2004.

The alternatives have a multiplier effect on the local economy that is directly proportional to the construction costs. Alternatives 3A and 3B will provide the greatest economic benefits to the area because of their higher construction costs. Alternative 4 is the least costly to construct and provides the fewest economic benefits.

The negative impacts are primarily related to the costs and disruption created by relocating residents and businesses due to right-of-way acquisition. Table S-5 shows the total number of residences and business that would be acquired by each alternative.

Table S-5.
Total Number of Residences and Businesses to be Acquired for each Alternative

	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternatives 3A and 3B	Alternative 4
Residential	131	156	110	84
Business	13	14	10	11
Lots	4	4	1	7
Other	0	1	0	0
Total	148	175	121	102

Social Impacts

All of the alternatives including the No Build will impact the social character of the Study Area. The social impacts to the community are a composite of many of the individual elements of the environment. The analysis of social impacts evaluates the various types of impacts created by each alternative. The analysis includes traffic

congestion, air quality, access to properties, safety, impacts on neighborhoods, impacts on recreation opportunities, social cohesion, services, schools, aesthetics, and quality of life. Many of these measures are qualitative.

Alternatives 3A and 3B have the fewest negative impacts to the elements used to measure social character. The No Build has the highest followed by Alternatives 1 and 2. Alternative 4 scores closer to Alternatives 1 and 2 in large part because of its impact on the rural character, aesthetics, and the Apple Capital Loop Trail.

Significant Areas of Controversy

In the course of the numerous public meetings, one area of controversy stands out: the location of Alternative 4. There are strong feelings both for and against this alternative because of its history and its location. Many people feel very strongly about protecting the shoreline of the Columbia River. Equally passionate are those who argue that this alternative is the least disruptive to existing neighborhoods and communities. These positions are largely value-based and the information presented in this DEIS can be used to refute or support either view.

Another area of controversy is the access management of Sunset Highway. Douglas County has stated that the inclusion of Alternative 3B in the DEIS does not mean they support it. Changing much of the access along Sunset Highway from unrestricted access to right-in, right-out only will impact those properties that remain with direct access after the project is constructed. While that number will be substantially less than exist today due to relocations, it will still represent a large number of properties.

Project Approvals

In addition to meeting the requirements of the NEPA and SEPA process, the project will require permits and approvals from federal, state, and local agencies before construction may begin. These are listed in the Fact Sheet at the beginning of the DEIS. First and foremost, the project requires approval and funding from the state legislature. Once the NEPA process is complete, WSDOT will prepare a funding request to the legislature. When and if it is approved will depend on the priority given the project and the availability of federal and state funds.

Environmental Commitments

Mitigation measures are recommended for each element of the environment. WSDOT and FHWA will review these recommendations together with additional suggestions from the public and determine which mitigations will become conditions attached to the project. The list of environmental commitments will be included in the Final EIS and made part of the Record of Decision by FHWA.